

Statement by the Minister of Health, Mr Michalis Hadjipantelas, on the decisions of the Council of Ministers for the reinforcement of the vaccination coverage

During yesterday's meeting, the Council of Ministers examined the epidemiological data and the evolution of the Vaccination Plan and made decisions aiming, among others, at the further promotion of the vaccination plan. Our aim remains to protect of Public Health and ensure the smooth functioning of the economy and society. We are mainly addressing our young people, who are the future of this country, and we invite them to reflect on the extent of their responsibility; to protect themselves first and foremost and by extension, their family members, their parents, their grandfathers and grandmothers, the whole of our society in general.

Our target is to open the path to freedom and we ask our young people to make the first step! To proceed to their vaccination and send the message that we are all united in this struggle.

In particular, the Council of Ministers has decided on a series of measures divided into **five pillars** as follows:

Pillar 1: Incentives to encourage and accelerate the vaccination plan:

- Vacation allowance to those vaccinated from July 15 to August 31. All details will be announced by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, next Monday.
- A five-day honorary leave to soldiers who have been vaccinated or will be vaccinated until August 31st 2021. The honorary leave will be granted both to the soldiers of the 2020 ESSO, as well as to the conscripts of the 2021 ESSO.
- Employees of the public, broad public and private sectors will be able to be absent from their work the whole day of their vaccination, without any reduction from their leave of absence. If it is a two-dose vaccine, this applies for both days. The same applies in the case of parents/legal guardians of minors, provided that the parent/legal guardian will accompany his/her minor child for vaccination and provided that a copy of the child's Vaccination Card will be presented for confirmation.

Pillar 2: Authorization of the Minister of Health to continue consultation with public law organisations and private organisations and businesses, to provide incentives for vaccination, especially to encourage young people aged 18-30 years. Upon completion of the consultation, the Minister of Health will present these incentives at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Pillar 3: Stricter measures in places of increased assemblage and increased risk of virus transmission and in places where influxes of positive cases have emerged:

- As of July 9th, the possession of a SafePass is required in indoor and outdoor spaces, where there is an increased risk of transmission and more than 20 persons congregate (i.e. work places, bars, clubs, weddings,

graduation and birthday parties, etc.). In cases of SafePass possession with a negative PCR or rapid test result, this shall be valid for 72 hours.

- From July 9th until July 20th, entrance to football games, **at 50% of stadium capacity**, will only be allowed to individuals who have completed their vaccination scheme or have been vaccinated with the 1st dose of the vaccine and three weeks have elapsed, to individuals holding a negative PCR test result valid for 72 hours and to individuals who have been infected by COVID-19 during the last 6 months. The 50% of space capacity applies with the same criteria to cinemas, theatres and concerts.
- As of July 21st, entrance to football games, **at 75% of stadium capacity**, will be allowed only to individuals who have completed their vaccination scheme and to individuals who have been infected by COVID-19 during the last six months. The 75% of space capacity applies with the same criteria to cinemas, theatres and concerts.
- As of August 1st 2021, passengers who are Cypriot citizens and permanent residents of the Republic of Cyprus must follow the protocols that apply for all passengers, unless they have been vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine. Specifically, only individuals vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine will be allowed to undergo a molecular test at the airports of the Republic upon arrival in Cyprus. That is, if they are not vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine or do not obtain a recovery certificate and will travel with a PCR test from countries of the Orange and Red Category, they will have to present a valid for 72 hours negative PCR test result from their country of origin. Minors aged 12-15 and individuals aged 16 and over who have serious health problems and thus cannot be vaccinated, are exempted from this decision.

Pillar 4: Intensification of the information campaign for public awareness concerning vaccinations, focusing on the younger ages.

Pillar 5: Stricter controls and supervision of the implementation of the protocols and health guidelines.

In addition to the above, the Council of Ministers decided to abolish the provision of **free rapid antigen testing as of 1st August 2021**. Minors aged 12-15 and individuals aged 16 and over, who have serious health problems and thus cannot be vaccinated, are exempted from this decision.

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